



Spring 2021





In this aerial photo of the Snelling Shops complex, the storage shed is the upper-rightmost building, just below the Montgomery Ward smokestack. It burned in 1925, destroying 24 streetcars.

**Twin City Lines is published
quarterly by the
Minnesota Streetcar Museum**

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Vol. 15 No. 2

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Twin City Lines is published quarterly and is mailed to members in good standing without charge under Third Class postal permit.

The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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Corrections and New Info

The top photo on page 13 of the Winter 2021 issue shows Franklin Avenue, not 22nd Street.

Fire!

-Brian A. Long

On, November 23, 1913, the quiet of the night was interrupted by a small explosion within the confines of the Mesaba Railway car barn in Virginia, MN. In a short time, the structure itself was enveloped in flames, destroying a significant amount of the railway's equipment in the blaze. By the time the fire was brought under control, and an accounting of the damage could commence, the fire had destroyed the car barn, the railway offices, passenger cars numbered 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18, express motor 101, and trailer 7. Altogether, the equipment destroyed by the fire comprised approximately 43% of the Mesaba Railway's revenue fleet. However, the phenomenon of car barn fires was nothing new to Minnesota's street railways, as this situation had been and would be repeated many times throughout the state's streetcar era, leading to the adoption of multiple fire prevention and suppression methods.

Car barn fires were, unfortunately, common in the early decades of the interurban and street railway era, with their frequency tapering off over time as fire suppression and prevention methods were developed. Car barn fires plagued many street railways throughout their existence in the United States, as well as across the world, due to the presence of flammable materials, such as wood, flammable chemicals, and fabrics in close

proximity to exposed electrical wires. It is within this environment where the three elements necessary to create a fire (heat, oxygen, and fuel) are largely present, allowing for conflagrations to erupt in short order.

A common trigger for fires across the many street railways was a short circuit occurring somewhere within the wiring of a streetcar (there were cases of arson in other states, but that was not as common as some form of accident). As many streetcars were made of wood, the intense heat from the short circuit or exposed wiring would ignite an ember or small flame somewhere within the confines of the streetcar. Often, this smaller fire would be allowed to grow, not from any malfeasance on the part of street railway employees, but from the pure fact that the fire was not discovered and addressed when it could feasibly have been extinguished. Eventually, the flames would grow to where street railway employees would be unable to extinguish the blaze, and the only remaining option would be to flee to safety.

Unencumbered, the flames would then eat whatever fuel was available, often destroying the car barn. Street railways, large or small, were often devastated by a single fire. The smaller street railways sometimes saw their entire fleet of streetcars destroyed if all their equipment was in the same building. Examples from the larger systems include a 1920 car barn fire in Winnipeg, Manitoba that consumed a significant portion of their fleet. The Phoenix, Arizona system experienced a fire in 1947 that consumed all but six of their streetcars. The Winnipeg system continued into the 1950s after purchasing twenty streetcars from Twin

City Lines to replace their destroyed cars, but the fire in Phoenix accelerated their bus conversion, and streetcars disappeared from Phoenix streets within one year. Car barn fires, however, should not just be thought of as a phenomenon of the past, as the National Capital Trolley Museum's 2003 fire is evidence of the threat still being present.

The Mesaba Railway was fortunate in that insurance covered the full cost of replacing all the equipment destroyed in the 1913 fire. The car barn and offices were rebuilt as well. Ultimately, the cause of the fire was the explosion of a hot water heater in one of the passenger cars stored in the building. Another hot water heater would explode less than six months later, on April 9, 1914, destroying passenger car 12. Once again, insurance covered the full cost of a replacement passenger car. It is not clear where car 12 was when this explosion occurred, but the car barn was unscathed in this second incident.

Throughout its history, Twin City Lines and its predecessor lines, the Minneapolis Street Railway and the Saint Paul City Railway, had to grapple with the dangers of car barn fires. It is safe to say Twin City Lines was no stranger to them, as eight occurred throughout its history. The first fire preceded the days of electric streetcars, when on February 11, 1886, the Smith Avenue horsecar barn caught fire. The damage totaled 25 horsecars, but the barn was rebuilt. Nevertheless, Smith Avenue seemed to be jinxed at this point, as two more fires occurred at that location. A fire in October 1892 damaged the structure, and another fire on July 19, 1899 destroyed the north half of the building and 60 cars (40 open and 20 closed streetcars).

October 1892 was not a pleasant

Front cover: This issue's feature story is how TCRT dealt with fire. This is one of a series of views of the Snelling Station fire suppression system being tested.

month for Twin City Lines as two carbarn fires occurred. Besides the Smith Avenue fire, another occurred on October 8, 1892, destroying multiple barns at the Grand Avenue complex. Supposedly, accidents and incidents come in threes, or so the railroaders say. Yet, if this is true, these fires would be the second and third. The first would be the West 7th Street carbarn fire in December 1891, which destroyed 23 horsecars. Thus, within the span of 10 months, Twin City Lines experienced three fires, destroying multiple buildings and dozens of cars.

The Saint Paul side of the system ended up having plenty more carbarn fires than the Minneapolis side of the system. In addition to the fires already

mentioned, the Kent Street barn in Saint Paul experienced one of the more disastrous fires in terms of the number of equipment lost. This fire, in either 1895 or 1896 (Russ Olson, in *The Electric Railways of Minnesota*, notes conflicting documentation on the date of this fire. Some documents indicated 1895, but other documentation places the date of the fire as February 21, 1896) destroyed approximately 100 pieces of equipment, comprised of mostly unused or disable electric cars and cable cars. The third Smith Avenue fire was the second most destructive with its 60 cars succumbing to the flames.

These fires closed out the nineteenth century for Twin City Lines, but there



Smith Avenue was the largest of the horsecar barns. All were 100 percent wood. Once electricity was introduced, the fire risk increased. Smith Avenue experienced three fires.



Seen in the distance about 1914, the wood Snelling storage shed was located in the southeast corner of the property (see the inside front cover) and housed 24 out of service cars, including the Thomas Lowry's private car and the first St. Paul horse car. It burned in 1925.

would be two more major carbarn fires in the years to come. Minneapolis had its first fire on July 7, 1906, when the Lyndale carbarn was destroyed. This is the only major carbarn fire to occur on the Minneapolis side of the system, and no record could be located as to the number of cars affected by the inferno. Minneapolis would be spared further destruction of its carbarns by fire, but Twin City Lines would experience one last fire that caused ample destruction.

The Snelling Shops complex, in addition to its car-building facilities, also had a storage building for extra

and unused streetcars. On August 17, 1925, it caught fire for unknown reasons. This fire destroyed 23 streetcars and work equipment and badly damaged one more piece of work equipment. Among the cars destroyed was St. Paul City Railway horsecar 1, which was being kept as a relic of the company's history. Thomas Lowry's private car was also lost in this fire. The passenger equipment destroyed included the remaining four cars of the American Car Company order that served as the precursor to the Twin City Lines standard design (car 612, 624, 625, and 626), as well as home-



built cars 860-865, 871-874, 877, 879, 947, and 951. Most of these streetcars were in storage as Twin City Lines had them listed for sale. Also destroyed was work car A-14 and supply cars 1 and 2. Finally, work car 15 was damaged by the fire, but was rebuilt in November 1925 and returned to work service.

The Mesaba Railway and Twin City Lines were not the only Minnesota street railways or car builders to experience the misfortune of carbarn fires. The first street railway-related fire outside of Twin City Lines occurred on May 15, 1892 (Russ Olson's working papers note May 15th, but Electric Railways of Minnesota notes May 7th) when carbuilder Northern Car Company shops in Robbinsdale experienced a large fire that resulted in

roughly \$60,000 in damage (in 1892 dollars). The article on TCRT's used streetcars in the Fall 2020 issue of Twin City Lines noted this fire as destroying Minneapolis Street Railway cars 552, 553, and 554, as well as multiple cars being built for the Saint Paul City Railway. The Electric Railways of Minnesota also notes some of the closed passenger cars that formerly operated on the Minneapolis, Lyndale, & Minnetonka (the Motor Line) as being destroyed. If that were not enough, an unknown number of cars destined for Rockford, Illinois were also destroyed.

The Granite City Railway of Saint Cloud was next to experience the misfortune of fire when the railroad's carbarn caught fire on December 12, 1898.

Destroyed in the conflagration were four passenger cars and one snowplow. The specific car numbers of the destroyed equipment are not known, but the fire did not spread to nearby car storage sheds. Fortunately, this meant other streetcars survived to continue the railway's operations.

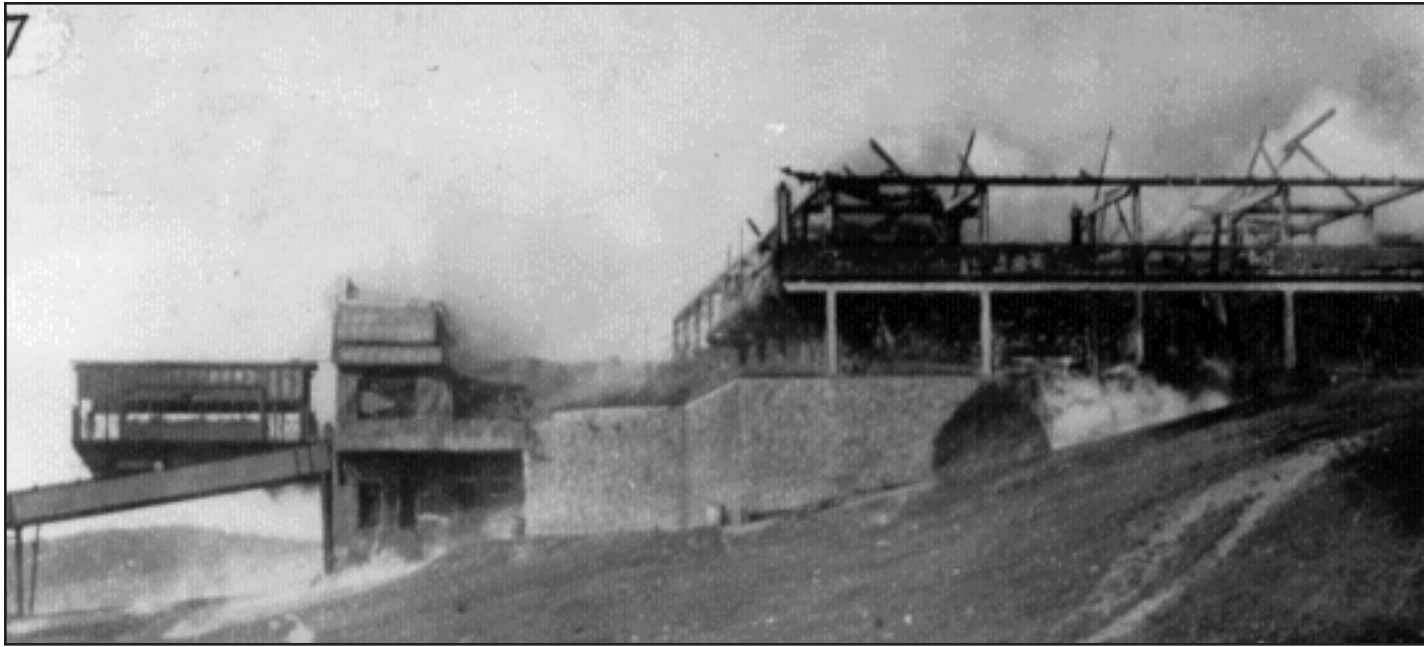
One final fire cannot technically be called a carbarn fire, but it did leave a notable impact on the history of street railways in Minnesota. On May 28, 1901, Duluth Street Railway's Incline railway suffered a powerhouse fire that resulted in the necessity to rebuild the incline railway. On that day, a small fire was discovered around 7:30am in a coal bin in the powerhouse at the top of the incline railway. Despite efforts to fight the blaze, the

fire quickly got out of control, engulfing the powerhouse within fifteen minutes. With the help of the wind, the fire jumped to the pavilion and the ultimately the incline car at the top of the incline.

Knowing the danger of an out of control incline car, those fighting the blaze used chain and cables to secure the incline car to the rails and prevent movement. The fire, however, weakened the chains and cables with its heat, causing the incline car to break free and move through the forces of gravity. Ablaze, the incline car sped down the incline railway, with the frame of the car coming to a hard stop at the bottom of the incline next to Superior Street. Despite the steel frame coming to a rest, the wood body of the



Snelling Station was the first of the fireproof carhouses in 1907 and set the pattern for Lake Street, Nicollet, North Side and Duluth Avenue. It was all concrete, masonry and steel, with fire doors separating the shop areas. Note the double-nozzled water cannon between the doorways.



incline car continued across Superior Street as it broke up, with some pieces found over two blocks beyond that point. The discovery of the fire, and the destruction of the powerhouse, pavilion, and one of the incline cars all occurred within the span of one hour. Over the 7 months following the disaster, the incline railway was converted to electric propulsion with a rebuilt incline car placed into service on January 1, 1902.

Naturally, with so many fires, and the danger they posed to the operation of street railways, street railways across North America devised ways to address the threat. Twin City lines was no different. Fire prevention was forefront on the minds of the architects who designed the buildings of the Snelling Shops complex, as well as the streetcar stations constructed by the company following the completion of Snelling. While the shops complex was designed prior to the fires following the San Francisco earthquake in April

The original version of the Duluth incline ended in spectacular fashion on May 28, 1901. A fire in the powerhouse at the top destroyed the adjacent recreational pavilion and released a car that ran away down the hill and demolished the Superior Street station. No one was injured. The incline was rebuilt and reopened the following year.



1906, the destruction wrought by the resulting fires did impact the building design in more consciously incorporating prevention and suppression. Thus, the fires in San Francisco, in addition to the fires in Twin City Lines' history, justified the expense of the concrete, brick, and steel construction of the shops and new car stations instead of wood.

The July 21, 1906 edition of the Street Railway Journal contained a short article describing the construction of the Snelling Shops complex, revealing fire prevention as a key component of the design of the buildings. Concrete and steel were used as the main structural building materials, with cement bricks and cement blocks used for the walls and face of the buildings. Therefore, by design, the presence of wood was reduced as much as possible in the buildings' structures. Additionally, as the shop complex consisted of multiple buildings, each building was spaced at least fifty feet from its neighbors to minimize the potential for fire to spread. The article also notes the Snelling Station building would include an interior fire sprinkler system for fire suppression, but other sources indicate this interior fire suppression system may not have been installed until later.

With all of the deliberate efforts at fire prevention in the design of the Snelling Shops complex, it may seem ironic that a major fire eventually occurred on the property. The Street Railway Journal article, however, does not mention the storage shed that would eventually be destroyed by fire in 1925 as the structure was constructed in 1908, two years after the article was published. It is unclear how closely the design of the car storage shed followed the design of the Snelling Shops complex in terms of fire prevention. Aerial photographs of the



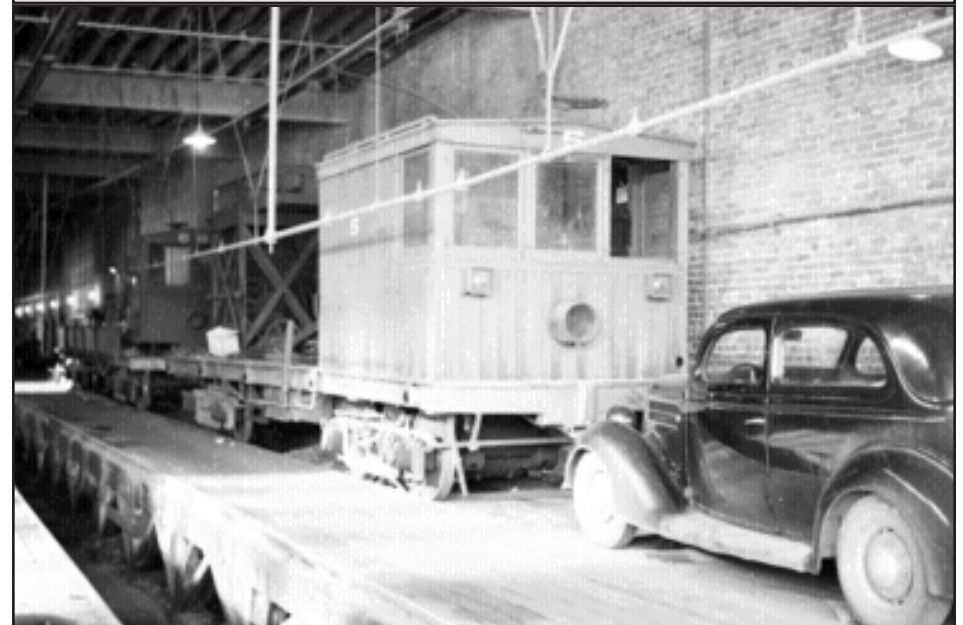
Above: Testing a fire tower at Snelling Station.

Snelling Shops complex from the early 1920s show this storage shed, but it is difficult to ascertain the specific building materials from these photographs. Nevertheless, we know this building was considered a total loss after the 1925 fire and demolished. Given what occurred, it seems reasonable to assume the construction of this storage shed departed somewhat from the design of the other buildings. After all, this shed was set on a part of the property a great distance from the shops complex and Snelling Station, enough so that the 1925 fire presented no danger to the other buildings. Nevertheless, and regardless of the building materials of the storage shed, the streetcars stored inside the shed provided plenty of fuel for the fire from their ample amounts of wood, thus showing that the risk of fire could never be truly eliminated.

The Twin City Lines car stations that

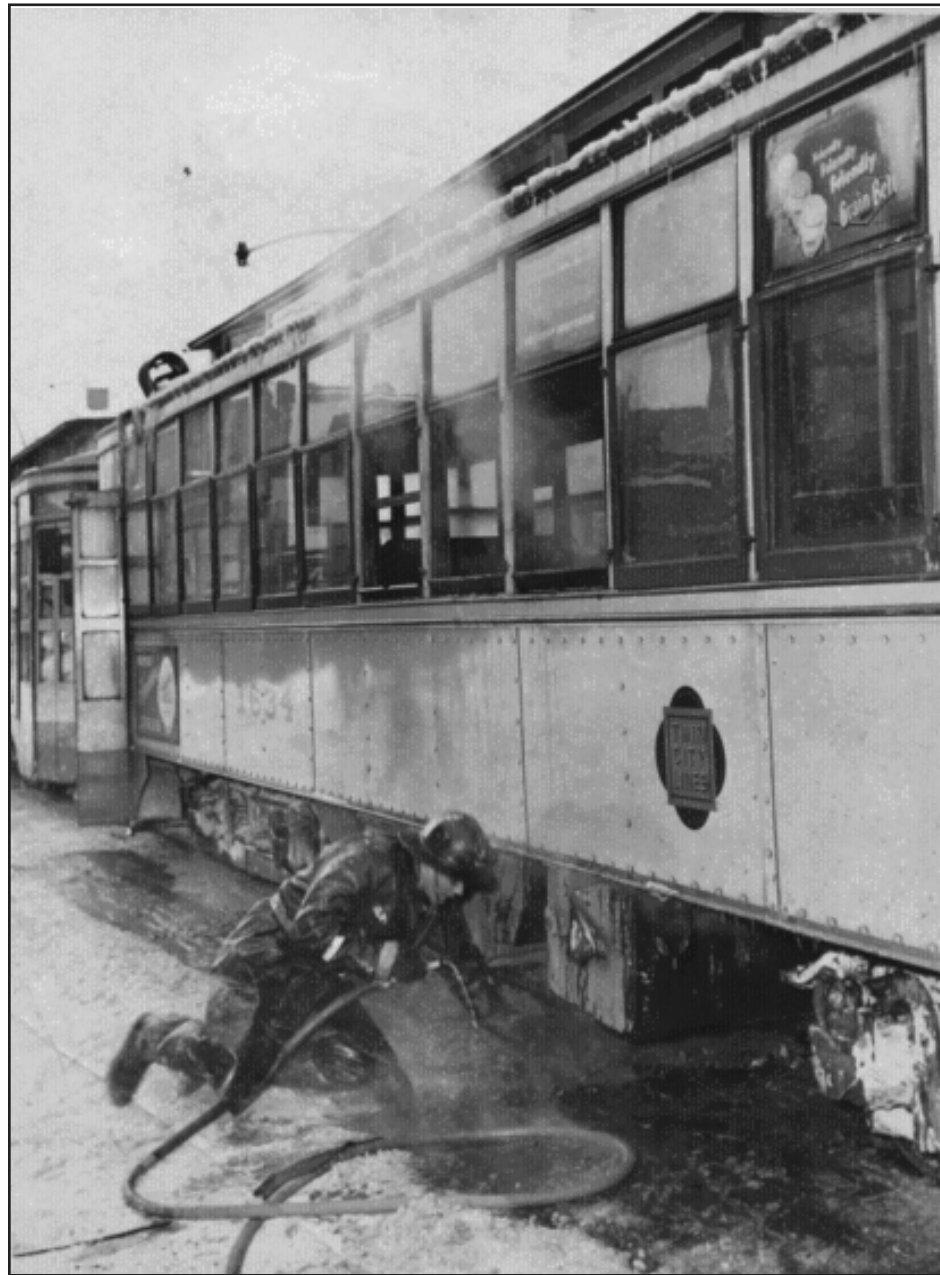


Below: Sprinkler systems inside Snelling Station (left, Jim Kreuzberger photo) and East Side Station (right, Norman Rolfe photo).



grew out of this time period were also constructed with an eye toward fire prevention. The June 29, 1912 issue of the *Electric Railway Journal* carried an article describing the construction of Nicollet Station, specifically noting the fire prevention measures inherent in its design. As Nicollet Station shared the same floor plan and materials as Snelling, Lake Street, and North Side stations, the description in the article can also be applied to the other stations. Further, the rebuilding of East Side and Duluth Avenue (name changed from East 7th Street in 1919) stations, as well as South Saint Paul Station, while not utilizing the exact same floor plans as the others, did utilize the same building materials. Thus, the article gives us a good sense of how these new or rebuilt stations included fire prevention measures.

The article notes Nicollet Station as having a concrete foundation, support columns, roof, and floors, with steel columns and trusses also used in the support of the car shed that covered six tracks closest to the station building itself. The walls for both station building and car shed were composed of brick, with hollow tile used in some areas, and each exterior face of the station building and car shed were brick. Wood was intentionally minimized in its construction, where even the trim around the windows was made of terra cotta, rather than wood. Further, the wall between the exterior car storage tracks and the car shed lacked windows, and included only four doors across its 303-foot length. Finally, the wall between the car shed and station building used fire doors, with the number of doorways being minimized as much as practical. The building materials and the design of the station building and car storage shed clearly incorporated as many fire prevention features as possible.



Given the fire risk in a wood-bodied streetcar, one has to wonder why TCRT persisted using underfloor, coal-fired heaters. Cars like #1300 had been equipped with electric heaters, which didn't require constant tending, shipping coal all over the city and hauling ashes back. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.

One other element of fire prevention may have been on the mind of Twin City Lines architects during the design and construction or rebuild of the system's many streetcar stations. That was the use of exterior storage tracks for streetcars, rather than the reliance on interior storage tracks in the older carbarns. William D. Middleton, in *The Time of the Trolley*, notes, "According to the *National Fire Prevention Quarterly*, there were 240 serious fires in North American street railway carbarns or workshops between 1897 and 1940" (p. 377). Middleton also notes that a fire would often disable the electricity to the extent that streetcars could not be evacuated from the building, thus resulting in potentially significant destruction of a streetcar fleet. It was this danger that probably factored into the decision by Twin City Lines to transition to mostly exterior streetcar storage tracks in the new and rebuilt stations, thus leaving interior tracks for streetcar maintenance purposes. In this way, if a fire were to start in one of the streetcars, the chances of the fire jumping to the station building or car shed would be significantly reduced. However, the only exception to this was the rebuilt East Side Station, which had no room on the property for exterior tracks.

As the newer streetcar stations were constructed, employees may have started comparing the risk of fires in the old carbarns versus the new streetcar stations. A 1910 memorandum notes a concern on the part of Twin City Lines employees of storing high-speed suburban cars in the Owen Street barn in Stillwater. Constructed in 1899, with wood as its primary building material, the Owen Street barn was showing its age by the time of the memorandum. When compared to the newer stations, the condi-



Even PCC cars could suffer the occasional electrical fire. Minneapolis Star photo.

tion of the building was cause for concern as to the fire danger present from the weathered wood that comprised most of the building. Further, streetcars could only be stored inside the structure, as the structure and track layout were not built for exterior streetcar storage. Despite the concern, the Owen Street barn would eventually be repaired and serve until the close of Stillwater streetcar service in 1932. The building never suffered a fire.

Fire suppression systems were also designed and constructed to supple-

ment the fire prevention elements of the Snelling Shops and various stations. Unique and not repeated elsewhere was the water cannon system covering the Snelling Station yard. The September 21, 1912 issue of the *Electric Railway Journal* describes its construction and operation. Nine towers, consisting of a single water cannon each, were constructed in strategic locations throughout the yard to facilitate spraying water at any location in the yard. Each cannon could be aimed in any direction and could spray water up to

eighty feet. There were also two more towers, consisting of two water cannons each, positioned at the entrances to each side of the station's shop building.

Every tower had its own valve to allow for independent operation of each water cannon. To activate the system, an employee would climb the ladder up the fourteen-foot tower closest to the fire, turn the wheel of the valve to open the flow of water, and aim the water cannon at the fire. The double

water cannons could even be aimed inside the car storage shed to extinguish an interior fire (the article notes an interior fire sprinkler system had not been installed inside the Snelling Station car storage shed, but photos from later years show such a system installed). To prevent freezing, the valves for each tower were placed seven feet below ground, so the valve wheel on top of each turret turned a rod that was connected to these below-ground valves. Additionally, the piping for the system was below ground, except for the riser pipe that covered the small distance from each valve and up the towers. The riser pipes had bleed valves to allow for excess water to be drained once the main valve had been closed and the water cannon shut off. A pump house on the property provided the necessary water pressure for eight of the eleven towers to operate simultaneously, and steamer connections linked to the city water mains could be turned on to provide additional water pressure if all eleven towers were needed. Finally, a hydrant system using a separate set of water pipes was installed as a redundant measure in case the water cannon system were to fail or a fire was small enough to not warrant the use of the water cannon system.

Photos in the museum's collection depict a demonstration of this water cannon system in operation (see front cover), proving the ability of the water cannons to cover the full Snelling Station yard. Once installed, the water cannons remained throughout the rest of the streetcar era in the Twin Cities, as photos of the yard from 1954 show

them still in place. However, this system was not installed anywhere other than Snelling.

Photographic evidence also points to fire suppression systems having been installed inside both East Side and Snelling stations, as well as in the Snelling Shops buildings.

A single photo in the museum's collection shows a similar system inside Duluth Street Railway's shop building. These photos show fire sprinkler systems installed in these buildings, with water pipes suspended from the ceilings and sprinklers attached to these pipes. Some photos also show valves with turning wheels to regulate the flow of water within the pipe system. The interior fire suppression system was installed in the Snelling Shops complex between 1925 and 1926, following the 1925 storage shed fire. It is not clear, however, when these systems were installed in any of the other buildings mentioned, but the photo of the Duluth Street Railway shop is the earliest of the photos, dating from the 1905 to 1910 period. Intriguingly, however, this sprinkler system does not appear in other photos of Duluth's shop or station interiors. The photos depicting the suppression systems inside East Side and Snelling stations are from the early 1950s. No photos have surfaced depicting similar fire suppression systems in Nicollet, Lake Street, North Side, Duluth Avenue, or South Saint Paul stations, but until further evidence appears, it would seem logical that Twin City Lines would invest in similar systems in their other stations.

In sum, the street railways in Minnesota experienced a number of carbarn fires across the history of the systems in the state. Twin City Lines experienced the most with a total of eight fires during its history. The Mesaba Railway, the Granite City

Railway, and the Northern Car Company each experienced one carbarn fire. The Duluth Street Railway experienced the destruction of much of its original incline railway via fire as well. Despite the destruction caused by all of these fires, it is fortunate that no street railway in the state was put out of business because of a carbarn fire, which is a fate that was set upon some railways outside of Minnesota. Ultimately, the prevalence of fires during the early decades of the streetcar era resulted in an increased focus on fire prevention and suppression that increased railway safety and contributed to the decrease in destructive fires on Minnesota's street railways.

Minnesota Carbarns and Car Building Facilities Destroyed by Fire

This list notes the various carbarn and car building facility fires in Minnesota in chronological order by decade:

1880 – 1889

- February 11, 1886 – Twin City Lines – Smith Avenue Carbarn's first fire: The fire destroyed 25 horsecars.

1890 – 1899

- December 1891 – Twin City Lines – West 7th Street Carbarn: The fire destroyed 23 horsecars. The building was not rebuilt.

- May 15, 1892 – Northern Car Company – Car Building Facility: A large fire in the car building facility destroyed cars destined for Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Rockford, IL, as well

as former Motor Line cars stored out of service. The company was unable to raise enough funds for a rebuild and subsequently went out of business.

- October 8, 1892 – Twin City Lines – Grand Avenue Complex: The multiple carbarns at the complex were destroyed in this incident. They were not rebuilt.

- October 1892 – Twin City Lines – Smith Avenue Carbarn's second fire: It is not known if any cars were damaged or destroyed in this fire.

- February 21, 1896 (some documentation indicates some time in 1895) – Twin City Lines – Kent Street Carbarn: Roughly 100 cars were destroyed in this fire. Most of the equipment destroyed consisted of unused and disabled electric cars, but some cable car equipment was also destroyed. This carbarn was not rebuilt.

- December 12, 1898 – Granite City



Much of the Mesaba Railway's wood interurban fleet was lost in this 1914 fire at the Virginia shops. Replacements that were delivered from the Niles Car Company were steel-bodied. Car building technology had advanced.

Railway (Saint Cloud) – Car barn Complex: This fire destroyed 4 cars and 1 snowplow. Other sheds and buildings in the complex escaped damage.

- July 19, 1899 – Twin City Lines – Smith Avenue Car barn’s third and final fire: The fire destroyed the north half of the building, taking 60 cars with it. Of the 60 cars destroyed, 40 were open cars and 20 were closed cars. Despite about half of the building being destroyed, the building was repaired and remained in use as a car barn until 1907, and then served as a storage barn until demolished in 1911.

1900 – 1909

- May 28, 1901 – Duluth Street Railway – Incline Fire: The fire destroyed one incline railway car, the powerhouse, pavilion, and the upper and lower stations within the space of one hour. The incline was converted to electricity during rebuilding and reopened on January 1, 1902.

- July 7, 1906 – Twin City Lines - Lyndale Car barn: The building was destroyed by fire, but it is unclear if any cars were destroyed as well. The structure had been used only for storage by that time, so it was not rebuilt.

1910 – 1919

- November 23, 1913 – Mesaba Railway – Car barn in Virginia, MN: The building was destroyed following the explosion of a hot water heater in one of the interurban cars. Passenger motor 13, passenger-baggage motors 15-18, express motor 101, and trailer 7 were destroyed. All losses, for both railway equipment and buildings, were covered by insurance.

1920 - 1929

- August 17, 1925 – Twin City Lines – Snelling Storage Shed: Many unused cars destroyed, including SPCR 1

(horsecar), the Lowry private car, 612, 624-626 (American Car Co.), 860-865, 871-874, 877, 879, 947, 951, work car A-14, and supply cars 1 and 2. Work Car 15 was damaged in the fire, but the steel frame survived, so the car was rebuilt in November 1925. No storage facility was built in its place.

The 1918 influenza pandemic

-Aaron Isaacs

Since we're still in the Covid-19 pandemic, it was suggested that your editor research the impact of the 1918 influenza epidemic on the streetcar system. Ridership had been growing every year since at least 1893. It reached 199.8 million in 1916, then plateaued at 199.6 in 1917. The transit system was busy and still struggling to meet demand.

The so-called Spanish influenza started on the east coast in Spring 1918 and spread west. It first appeared among soldiers at Fort Snelling and military cadets at the University of

Minnesota. From there it spread to the general population. On October 4, 1918 there were 1000 cases, half of them soldiers. The first civilian deaths followed within days.

On October 10 doctors began to recommend banning all parades and large gatherings. That day there were 221 new cases reported and 10 deaths.

The gatherings that no one could avoid were on the streetcars, where rush hour crush standing loads were the norm. In the October 14 Minneapolis Tribune, Dr. Richard Beard, assistant dean of the U of M medical school, decided that better ventilation would help. He said, "Walk, rather than ride. Ride, if you must, in an open air conveyance. Button up wraps and overcoats and open wide the windows of the street car however cold it may be."

The next day the Minneapolis City Council directed the city health department to work with stores and employers to reduce the loads on the streetcars by closing on alternate days. Shoppers were advised to avoid the

afternoon rush hour.

Schools were closed on October 22, which reduced ridership by high school students.

The October 26 Tribune reported that City officials had met with TCRT to propose reducing the number of passengers per streetcar. President Horace Lowry was agreeable to trying. "Mr. Lowry declared that much of the difficulty lies in the disinclination of the public to permit cars to go by when there seemed to be room for more passengers." The city's initial idea was to add streetcars to lessen the load per car. TCRT had no financial incentive to do so, and it was probably impossible to accomplish during the rush hours anyway. Instead both Minneapolis and St. Paul officials and TCRT agreed to limit streetcar loads to 84 passengers. The cars seated about 50, so 84 was still a large standing load, just not packing them to the doors. In retrospect reducing loads to 84 would have had zero positive health impact. It didn't help that gas rationing was in effect because of World War I, which pushed more



The 1918 influenza started with Fort Snelling soldiers, then spread to University of Minnesota military cadets. In this photo U of M cadets have just finished maneuvers on the St. Paul campus and are waiting for the Inter-Campus streetcar at the Cleveland Avenue stop. Note that many are wearing face masks. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

people onto the streetcar system. In fact, the government had mandated "gasless Sundays", which pushed more people onto the streetcars.

The infections continued unabated and on November 8 the city closed "all saloons, dance halls, soda fountains, cafes and restaurants, including chop suey restaurants". The TCRT Schedule Department logbook had these notes. "Account of Spanish Influenza Epidemic, theatres, etc. closed temporarily and therefore 12 minute service at night operated on both Monroe & Bryant and 4th Ave. So. & 6th Ave. No. lines effective Oct. 24, 1918.

The closure was lifted and the regular night schedules resumed on November 15. Those are the only service reductions I've been able to document.

As cold weather began to arrive, the paper announced, "Street car windows will be kept open until the temperature drops to the freezing point, when they will be closed if the cars are heated and a ventilating system is installed. After a conference with A. W. Warnock, general passenger agent for the Twin City Lines, it was announced that special ventilation and heating systems will be installed in all cars during the next few days." It is unclear what that ventilation and heating system would have been. Warnock may have been referring to the new forced air systems that replaced hot water heat, but that didn't happen until 1920-1924.

The number of new infections and deaths gradually subsided in November and by November 15 the business closures were revoked. Schools were reopened briefly in December, but the virus rebounded somewhat, causing them to be closed again.

The epidemic had an impact on 1918

ridership, which dropped 10.7 million from the year before, from 199.6 million to 188.9 million. Since that drop was concentrated in the fourth quarter of 1918, that quarter was down 22 percent from what it would have been. Ridership rebounded to 222.1 million in 1919.

Also in the Russell Olson Library are the TCRT and Duluth Street Railway annual reports for 1918. Both contain almost identical language. "During the months of October and November the Spanish Influenza epidemic, and the necessary quarantine regulations, largely reduced the Company's gross income."

The Farewell Parade

-Joseph Zalusky

Note: On the last day of streetcar service TCRT management put on a big event to celebrate the conversion to bus. They removed the seats from eight streetcars, installed tables the length of each car and served lunch on the way from downtown Minneapolis to Snelling Shops. There they symbolically burned a streetcar before returning to Minneapolis by bus. This first-hand account appeared in the Spring 1970 issue of Hennepin County History, published by the Hennepin County Historical Society. Its editor and the Society's historian/curator Joseph Zalusky was a trolley fan. His comprehensive Twin

Cities transfer collection now resides in our Russell L. Olson Library.

Friday afternoon on June 18, 1954 at 12:25 pm, eight old, rather tired streetcars loaded to capacity with streetcar and City officials and friends left the East Side Station bound for their last resting place, there to be dismantled and destroyed. The car on which the Editor rode was number 1678. A long table, running lengthwise and all set for a luncheon of shrimp and chicken salad, greeted the 36 guests who were to occupy this car.

The cavalcade of cars, each individually operated, left the station and started slowly down East Hennepin



TCRT president Fred Ossanna mugs for the news photographers. The location of this photo is unclear. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



Left: Turning onto Washington Avenue.

Above: Fred Ossanna tried the controls.

Below right: Ossanna locked the brakes, provoking this response from the motor-man.

Below left: Waiting for lunch.
All St. Paul Pioneer Press photos.





Avenue and crossed the east and main channels of the Mississippi River, thence to First Street, westerly to First Avenue North, southerly to 11th Street, thence over to Hennepin Avenue and to Washington Avenue South. We were escorted through the Loop by police cars which stopped traffic at each intersection. All this time the guests were visiting, eating their luncheon, and in general enjoying themselves.

The streets were lined with people wondering what it was all about. Some waved at us and we responded. We proceeded slowly easterly on Washington Avenue, which gave us time to finish eating and to get a good view of that part of the city.

In our car were the City Engineer, the Traffic Engineer, and several others from the City departments. All were in for a little "ribbing" when we came to the Washington Avenue bridge, thought to be unsafe for many years for heavy loads. The City Engineer told us there was no danger, but I did notice that only one car crossed the bridge at a time.

It didn't take us long to get to the "Snelling Yards" in St. Paul, which by this time was converted into a cemetery for the old, tired, worn-out cars. When the car came to a stop, it was a sort of signal for some of the guests to get souvenirs as reminders of the last official streetcar ride. Then the guests watched the president of the company put a torch to one of the cars to give the occasion a dramatic ending.

After securing our souvenirs, it took but little time for other souvenir-minded people to take possession of flags, bells, hangers, poles, signs and anything that could be easily taken. This

Food was staged on the back platforms and served enroute. Both St. Paul Pioneer Press photos.





Top left: The parade turns off University Avenue into Snelling Station, under the watchful eye of maintenance superintendent Frank Morgan. Don Berg photo.

Bottom left: This is the north end of the station yard. Buses are waiting to return everyone to Minneapolis. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.

Above right: Fred Ossanna starts burning the first streetcar. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.

Right: TCRT officials and local dignitaries pose on one of the Snelling Shop shifter cars. Ossanna is at left. Third from left is James Tuohy, the company treasurer. Second from right is Barney Larrick, brought in from National City Lines to oversee the streetcar-to-bus conversion. Don Berg photo.



“legal vandalism” was being done as the old condemned car, which must have been saturated with oils and grease, sent tongues of flame and heavy black smoke high in the sky.

The cars on which we started our trip were by this time too tired and worn out, I think, to take us back home. We were told to board a special new bus which brought us safely back to our starting place. A coupon was given to each guest which entitled him

to a chance on an old street car to be given away to some lucky person. Mayor Hoyer of Minneapolis turned out to be the lucky person who won it. He stated that the car would be turned over to the Minnesota Historical Society. The question is “where to put it?”

The bus parade

TCRT made a big deal out of the streetcar-to-bus conversion. 500 new

buses came from General Motors. On July 7, 1953 TCRT paraded 100 of them through town. They started by the Basilica, then Hennepin Avenue

through downtown, Central Avenue, Lowry Avenue, Penn Avenue N., West Broadway, Washington Avenue, Nicollet Avenue through downtown,

then out Hennepin to Lake Street to 27th Avenue S. Accompanying them were 15 new radio-equipped supervisor cars. It was a big time PR event.



Left: Led by a pair of red and cream TCRT supervisor cars, the bus parade heads into downtown on Hennepin Avenue at 16th Street, passing a PCC car. Four days later the Chicago-Penn-Fremont, Selby-Lake and the St. Paul end of the Como-Harriet were converted to bus.

Right: The parade stretches through the heart of downtown on Nicollet Avenue at 7th Street, passing Dayton's department store.

Minneapolis Star-Tribune photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.





The parade traveled up Central Avenue through northeast Minneapolis. Here it passes under the Northern Pacific's B Line. Streetcars were abandoned here on February 21, 1953. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Uncle Whyso spends a quiet restful day touring on Minnetonka

From the Minneapolis Tribune
August 11, 1907

The fictional Uncle Whyso managed to sample TCRT's entire Lake Minnetonka operation, including both streetcar lines, all four express boat routes, the Big Island ferry and part of one of TCRT's 40-mile cruises. This story has been edited for length.

Uncle Whyso expressed a desire to enjoy the beauties of fair Minnetonka. None of the folks could take the time to personally conduct him around the lake, but he made the best of it, after having the 60-minutes-from-Sixth-Street (6th and Hennepin, location of the downtown station for Minnetonka streetcars) slogan thoroughly pressed into his intellectuals from all possible angles, he wandered down to the street car station on his own account. He had his mind made up for a quiet, restful day at the lake and with the latest folder and time card in his inside pocket he climbed into the first car that came along.

When he got back that night on the last car from the lake nobody heard him come in, but, next morning, after breakfasting, he gathered the family on the comfortable, screened back porch, lit his favorite pipe and related his adventures as follows:

Takes the Limited

"I goes into the ticket office on Sixth Street and buys one of their little coupon books and climbs onto the first car that come along, which happened to be an Excelsior Limited leaving at 8:03 am. Well, we sure did go some on the way out, even passing a few big auto cars going out Hennepin, and as

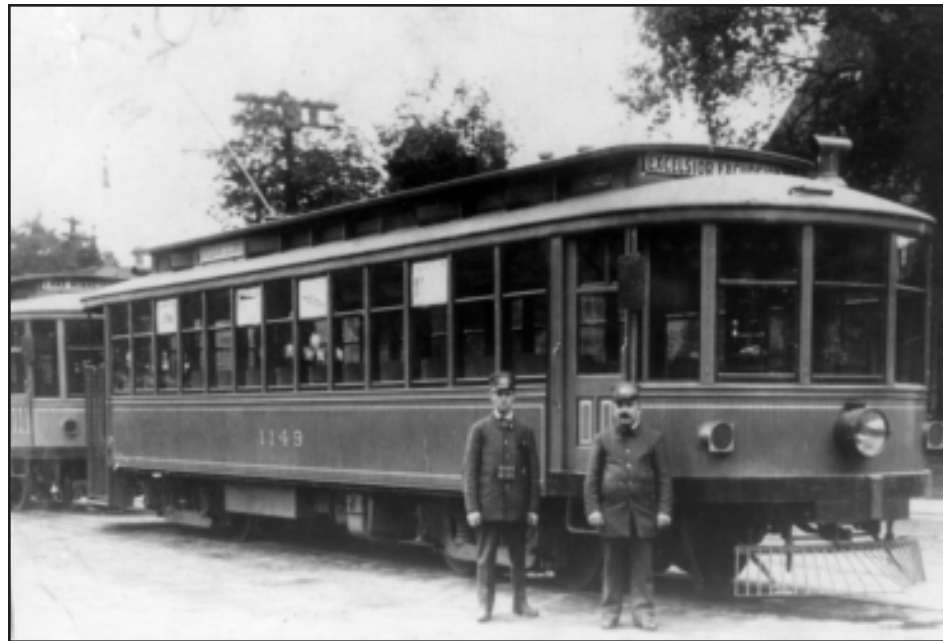
we whirled past Calhoun and Harriet, I had only time to pay my respects having what the boys would call just a look-in. I liked the way, though, the train crew had of making occasional stops at a telephone pole to talk to the train dispatcher down on Sixth Street, for it made me feel as if they were doing something for the safety of their passengers. I felt a little uneasy at first as we swung around those curves and over the high bridge at Hopkins, but everything seemed safe and sound, and when I got to the docks at Excelsior I was nerved up for anything the lake service had to offer.

Just Going It Blind

There were six or seven boats lying in their slips, with banners flying and uniformed hired men standing by to load 'em up, and after studying the different signs I shut my eyes and walked to the nearest boat. When I got aboard and looked around and saw another lot of wicker car seats with aisles running up and down and the fare register standing as bold as you please and a conductor with the regulation band and number on his hat. I rubbed my eyes and said to him: "Here, you, I just got off of a street car and want a boat ride. Let me off where I can take a boat."

But he jammed me down in a seat, yelled "All aboard", and before I knew what was up he had taken my ticket, rung it up on the register and we were halfway across the bay. Then I began to tumble that the street car folks had got the right of way on water as well as the earth, and decided to make the best of it and get the worth of my money.

The car-boat or boat-car, or whatever you call it, stopped at most of the crossings and picked up and let off passengers just as natural as life, and that fare register kept right at work just the same as on the Selby-Lake or



Above: Excelsior Excursion cars were extras that terminated at the Excelsior Dock Station. The Lake Minnetonka car behind it ran the hourly schedule to Tonka Bay. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

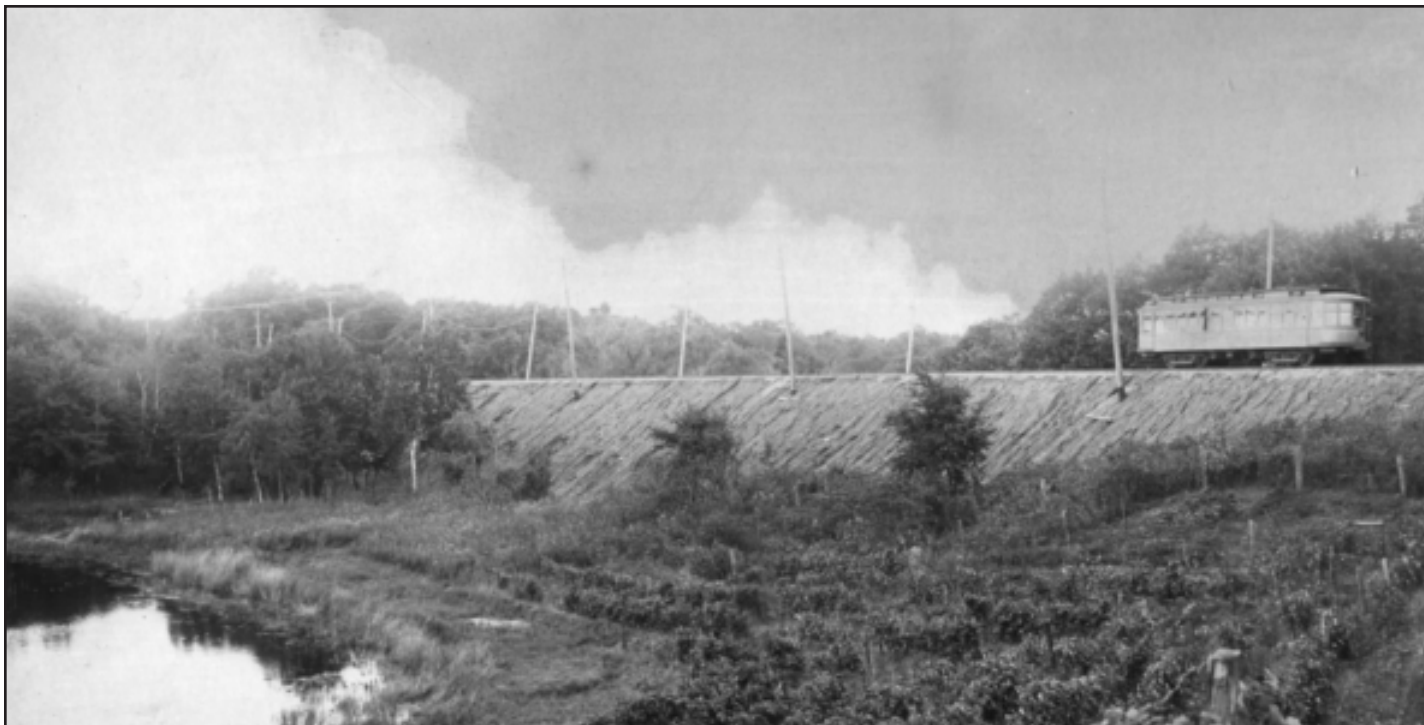
Below: 60 miles per hour across Minnetonka.



Como-Harriet, so I looked at my time card to see where I wanted to go next. It was now 9:23 and we were just pulling up at the Linwood crossing.

Stops at Wayzata

I saw that the boat was due in Wayzata at 10:05. So I landed at



Top: A westbound car passes Purgatory Creek in Minnetonka. Sweet photo.

Bottom: Express boats line up at the Excelsior Dock Station. This is a post-1914 view, because the Excelsior has been added to the fleet.



Wayzata and as the next boat didn't come along for over an hour and as my old legs was a little cramped from the combination car and boat ride, I thought I would walk up the track five miles to Minnetonka Beach, where I saw there was a boat due to go somewhere at 11:33. I hiked along Jim Hill's new ties at a three-miles-an-hour gait, just making my connection with another one of those cunning contraptions—a cross between a double-decked street car and converted launch.

Out for a Record

I piled on board without asking any questions, for by this time the spirit of the game had taken hold of me and I was determined to see if I couldn't make a record against any combination schedule Arti Warnock (the TCRT General Passenger Agent) could figure out. This boat went over another track. We skirted Big Island, dodged Gale's Island and first I knew, we were steaming into the station at Tonka Bay. As the next boat wasn't due until 12:33, I had time enough to get a lunch and watch the kids roller skate.

It being Sunday, I caught on to the fact that the boat for the upper lake stopped at Tonka Bay and when it came along on I climbed, determined to see what changes had been wrought above the Narrows, through which we passed to Zumbra Heights, where we were due at 12:37. I asked the con (conductor) where I could go without taking a transfer or leaving the boat line, but all he said was "Oh, go as far as

you like". We got back to Tonka Bay at about 1:33 and I had plenty of time to catch the 2:13 for Spring Park, reaching there at 2:35.

Still Searching for Quiet

The day was little more than half gone and as I was out for a quiet, restful Sunday outing, I hiked the two miles between Spring Park and Mound, just to see how the country had developed. Much to my surprise, I didn't find any street car boat waiting for me at Mound, but it wasn't long before the big Excelsior, due at 4:13, steamed in on her regular 40-mile excursion trip, and boarding her, I brought up again at Tonka Bay landing at 5:23. I had become attached to Tonka Bay landing by this time, for it was so easy to get away from it with three different boat lines touching there. As I had some friends stopping at Wildhurst I took the 6:03 boat, giving me until 7:23, when I rode clear back to Excelsior, arriving there at 8:00 pm sharp.

Winding Up at Big Island

Meanwhile I hadn't forgotten Big Island and as the 8:20 ferry boat was getting ready to pull out with a load



for the evening concert I strolled aboard and took a seat on the hurricane deck. Landing on Big Island I strolled up through the pergola and took a seat in the Casino. At 10:03 I left the Casino and stepped on the first express boat I saw lying at the small docks. It happened to be a boat for Deephaven, where I landed at 10:33 and, as luck would have it, there was a chartered car waiting there for a party of club people who had been eating at

the yacht club. They invited me to join them and I got to the top of Lowry Hill at 11:33, taking a transfer to the Kenwood line home.

I'm mighty glad I took in Minnetonka for I don't know when I got more riding and resting for my money. And no railroad time table will ever scare me again."

Above: The express boat and the Great Northern's Wayzata depot are both new in this circa 1906 photo. The Minnehaha docks here today. Sweet photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Below: It's a busy day at the Tonka Bay dock as a heavily-loaded express boat arrives. C. P. Gibson photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.





Above: On the express boat Como from Wildhurst approaches the Spring Park dock and the Hotel Del Otero.
Below: We don't know the location, but the boat crew has been distracted by the sight of the two women in the foreground draped across the dock.



Above: Once each hour the Zumbra Heights and Spring Park boats converged at the Wildhurst dock to exchange passengers with each other and the Tonka Bay streetcar.

Below: The Excelsior was one of the pre-existing boats purchased by TCRT and used for day-long tours of the lake, which lasted until 1911.
Both Sweet photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



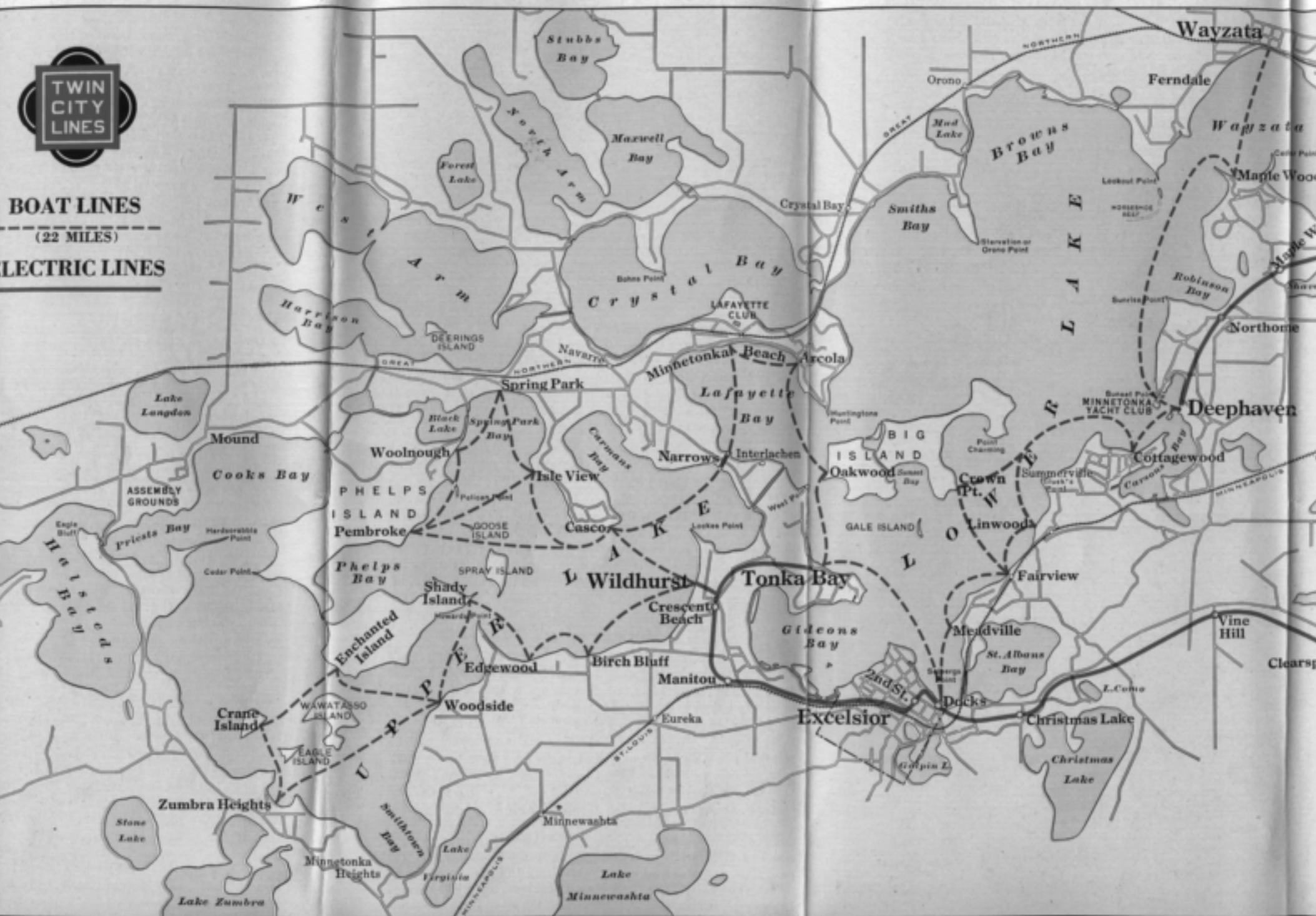


The ferry St. Paul at the Big Island dock, alongside the Puritan, which is running in TCRT tour service. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

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August 2021

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